

BEGINNING OF CHRISTIANITY.

TWENTY LESSONS FOR ADVANCED CLASSES.

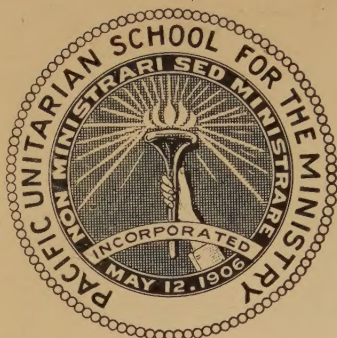
BY
THOMAS R. SLICER.

SIXTH EDITION.

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BOSTON, 25 BEACON STREET; CHICAGO, 175 DEARBORN STREET

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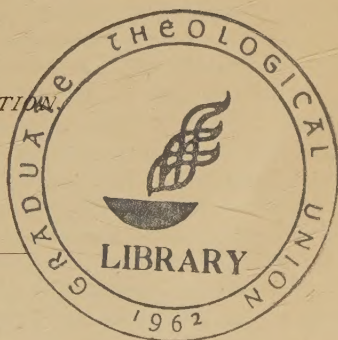
The Early Old Testament Narratives and Scenes in the Life of Jesus have pictures for Intermediate Grade and special Helps for Teachers.

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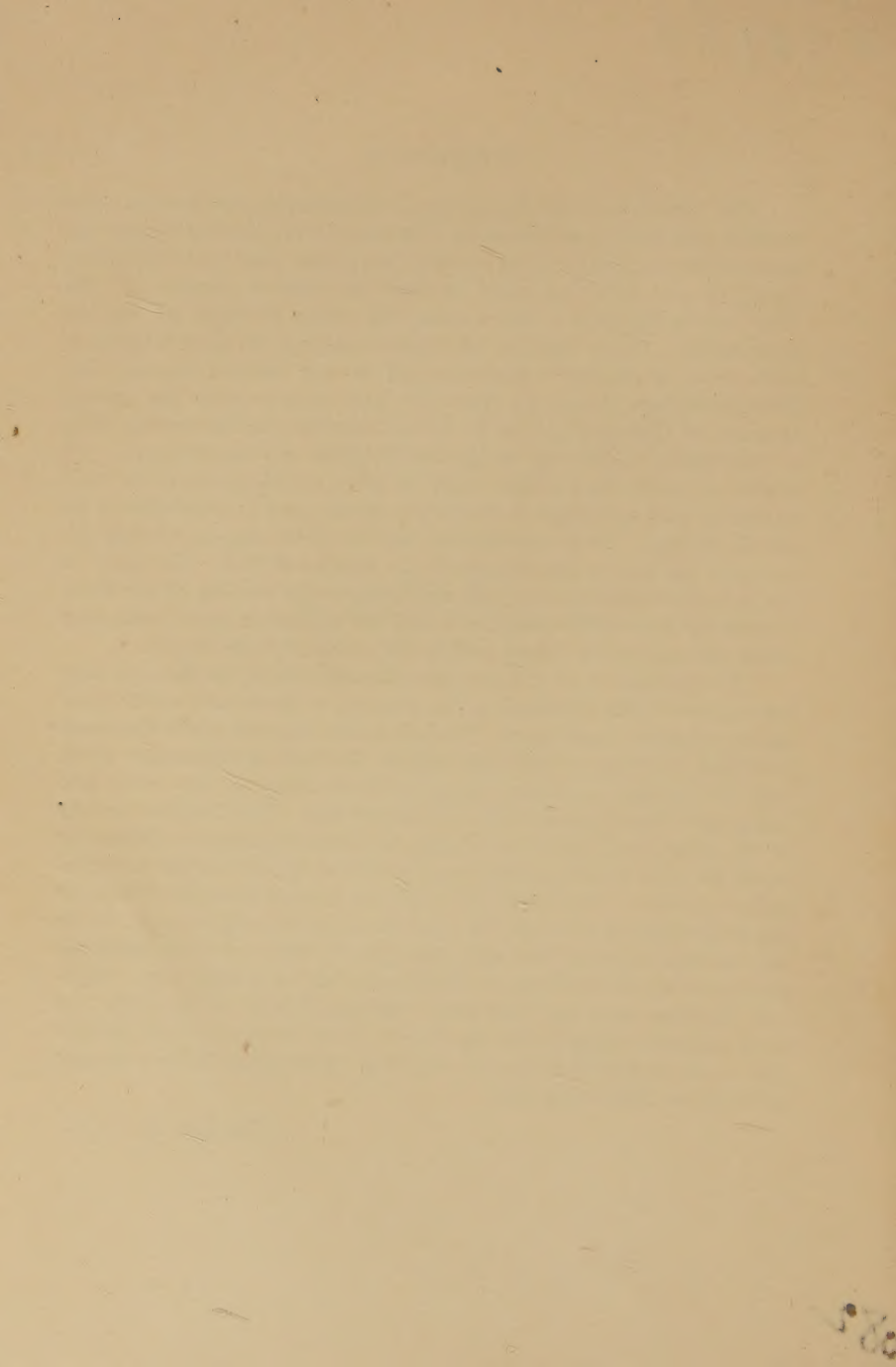
PREFACE.

The lessons upon the Beginning of Christianity, prepared for older students and based upon the salient incidents in the Book of Acts of the apostles, do not pretend to be a commentary upon this most interesting document, but rather an effort to show the natural outcome of "the Way" of the disciples of Jesus from that centre of which he was the illumination. There has been no sufficient scope in the space allotted to each lesson to observe critical methods to any marked degree. But throughout these studies an effort has been made to show the natural evolution of Christianity from its Jewish inception, and the passage from a local aspect of Judaism to its manifestation as a world-religion. Of course, no more than a hint could be given of this process, the most wonderful and instructive in the history of the soul's interpretation of its moral mission. Very considerable care has been used in relating the recital in the Acts to the allusions in the epistles of Paul. The value of the undoubted epistles as a guide and check in the reading of the Book of Acts has been made conspicuous, and the student is urged to examine every reference which is indicated in the course of these lessons.

The question of the genuineness and early date of the Book of Acts has not been much discussed, as the contents of the record, not its genesis, was of prime importance. The composite character of the document is evident, but it is an invaluable record of events and processes which have their witness in what the second century shows to have come into being, and to have asserted itself as historic fact. The Christian writers of the second and early part of the third century, show conditions for which the Acts of the Apostles and the related epistles furnish an explanation of origin. Most of all, the hope has been entertained that some emphasis might be strongly laid upon the simplicity of the gospel which was the inspiration of these early disciples of Jesus, and made them the means of a moral revolution in the Roman Empire of their day. Whatever education there may have been "through illusion to the truth," the truth remained regnant after the illusion passed away, and that discipleship which came to be known as "the Way" proved itself to be a method of the divine life among men.

THOMAS R. SLICER.

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LESSON I.

AT THE BEAUTIFUL GATE.

(Acts iii. 1-10.)

LESSON TEXT.—“What I have, that give I thee.”—Acts iii. 6.

I. INTRODUCTION, CONNECTING HISTORY.

The Great Teacher,—master of the art of living,—whose parables we have been studying, had now surrendered his life for the sake of his truth. The disciples were convinced that he was now alive again in a manner different from his earthly life, but just as real to them.

They were living in expectation of his return. This conviction and this expectation had bound them in a unity which expressed itself in a complete devotion to their Master and to each other. They met to partake of the “love feast” together, and parted from each other with “the kiss of peace” (Acts ii. 43-47). They still kept sacred the Sabbath, as they were all Jews in religion. Their devotion to Jesus was not only personal, but as the true Messiah. They had in no sense separated from the Jewish worship; and we find them, so far as their fear of the enemies of Jesus permitted, frequenting the Temple and participating in its services. There were at first about an hundred of them in Jerusalem, thus bound together by a common affection and “the good news” of God which their Master had proclaimed. This number was soon increased to thousands (Acts ii. 37-42). How completely the Jewish feeling for tradition was theirs may be seen in their completing the number of the apostles to *twelve* by electing Matthias in place of the traitor Judas (Acts i. 15-26).

The account of outpouring of the Spirit at the anniversary of the giving of the Law to Moses (Pentecost) should be made the subject of serious attention by the student (Acts ii. 1-13), as also the brave sermon of Simon Peter (Acts ii. 14-36), which is the argument of a zealous Jew to Jews for faith in the Christ.

NOTE.—There should be a careful analysis made of this passage in which Peter's sermon is recorded, and a comparison made between it and that which follows this lesson (Acts iii. 11-26); also compare with the sermon of Stephen (Acts vii.).

II. THE RECORD

Places the scene of our lesson in the Temple court at “the hour of prayer,”—the ninth hour,—about three o'clock in the afternoon. The particular spot where the drama of compassion was enacted is mentioned,—the gate of the court, called “the Beautiful Gate.” The scene is graphic, as is the manner of the Book of Acts.

A chronic cripple who has for a long time been brought to this spot lies there as usual, his deformity and helplessness contrasting with the beautiful gate,—an appeal, like prayer, to the praying multitude. He asks alms of Peter and John, as of any

worshipper at the hour of prayer. Here is the proof that they mingle with the crowd, not distinguished by their discipleship to Jesus from those about them. Perhaps they are in that part of the Temple where the schools of the Rabbis are held, and have their own group of believers praying to the Father of Jesus in a spirit wholly different from that which had impelled them in the old days, before they knew the Christ and learned of him.

They were filled with the Holy Spirit. They had already realized "the power" which he had promised should come upon them. The appeal of the cripple moves their compassion. They no longer ask, "Who did sin, this man or his parents?" They said, "Look on us!" Evidently it is intended to convey a suggestion of something peculiar in the method of Peter and John (verse 4). They declare their poverty as to money, and offer him the better gift of health (verses 6-8). The cheering note of courage is in the voice of Peter, who had denied his Master through fear. The strong grasp of a hand lifts the man who had settled down to the life of a begging cripple. The effect is immediate, and the cure is demonstrated by the cripple "walking, leaping." He places the tribute of his gratitude where it belongs (verse 9), but holds fast to his new helpers until the crowd surrounds them all in the Porch of Solomon, which is associated so closely in the minds of the apostles with the teaching of Jesus in the same place (John x. 22). This porch, called Solomon's, was to be the scene of yet other wonders (Acts v. 12-16).

III. SUGGESTED TOPICS.

1. Review the characters of Simon Peter and John, as given in the gospels, and note the change which is shown in their behavior, now that "the power" of the Holy Spirit is theirs.

2. How do you account for the change, not only in these disciples, but in the whole company who seemed smitten with despair at the death of Jesus?

3. In the study of the miracles (called "powers" in most instances in the New Testament) must we not make a distinction between those recorded wonders which have a moral motive and those which only surprise? This distinction seems to be intended in the New Testament between those "miracles" called respectively "powers" and "signs."

4. Is there anything in the character of the recovering of the cripple which is necessarily contrary to nature, if we make the word "nature" include the laws of life and mind,—spiritual as well as material?

5. The evident purpose in the recital in the lesson is to show that the gift of healing which Jesus had, his disciples had also (see also Acts x. 38); and, in the postscript to Mark's gospel (xvi. 19), we have the account of the conferring of this power.

IV. REFERENCE TO A PARTIAL LIST OF LITERATURE FOR THIS AND FOLLOWING LESSONS.

Teachers may consult with advantage the works upon the age of the apostles by Hausrath and Weizächer. Advanced students will find much assistance from the works of Farrar upon Paul, and may read with profit, for local color, Renan's "Apostles" and "Antichrist," and also Farrar's "Darkness and Dawn"; but, in this last, allowance must be made for the tendency in the English Churchman to put occasionally into the speech of disciples of the first century the language of the second and third centuries. For details of Temple worship, etc., full information is given in Schürer's "Jewish People," while Ramsay's "Church in the Roman Empire" should be consulted in connection with Farrar's "Paul" and Stanley's "Epistles to the Corinthians." On this last subject John Hamilton Thom's "Epistles to the Corinthians" is very illuminating.

LESSON II. THE FIRST MARTYR.

(Acts vi. 8-15; vii.)

LESSON TEXT.—“The Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands.”—Acts vii. 48.

I. THE CONNECTING HISTORY.

Peter's sermon in Solomon's Porch, which was delivered after the lame man's cure, was resented by the Sadducees, especially because of the people's accepting so heartily Peter's declaration of the resurrection of Jesus. They invoked the aid of the priests and the Temple guard, and Peter and John were arrested. On the following morning they were arraigned before the Sanhedrin (Acts iv. 5-21). Peter is yet more bold in proclaiming the power of Jesus, as seen in them and the cured cripple.

The popular ferment is so great that the Jewish rulers resort only to threatening and forbidding the apostles to preach in the name of Jesus; but they cannot fail to see that “a great sign” has been shown of something more than “a good deed done to an impotent man,” as Peter expresses it. The apostles find “their own company,” and report what had transpired. The effect was to raise the enthusiasm of the whole assembly to rapture; and the scene given (Acts iv. 23-31) may be regarded as an indication of the state, social, mental, and spiritual, in which the followers of Jesus were now living.

In the succeeding verses (Acts iv. 32-35) there is implied a unity of purpose which has been often misconstrued as a proof of communism in the early church, and has led to vain attempts at imitation, which have failed for the simple reason that a divine impulse of common affection for a common cause and its leader differs greatly from any scheme of speculative altruism.

The story of Ananias and Sapphira is a high light on the picture, which has for its justification this statement, “No man said that any of the things which he possessed was his own” (Acts iv. 32). The tragical scene might occur under conditions so highly charged with emotion and lifted so far above the normal as these accounts seem to indicate. But the use of it by the Christian Church has degraded a study of the beginnings of Christianity into a miniature Day of Judgment for the punishment of two disciples who lied about a real estate transaction. Acts v. records the imprisonment of the apostles a second time, and is heightened, as a recital, by attributing a healing influence to Peter's shadow, and recites their liberation from prison by “the angel of the Lord.”

In this scene other apostles appear as actors, but Peter remains the chief speaker. The argument in their behalf before “the council,” by Gamaliel (Acts v. 34-40), is a very significant bit of the history, and should be read with attention. Compare the presence of Saul and his share in the martyr's condemnation, though a disciple of Gamaliel, with the utterance of the same man

after he had suffered for the name of Jesus (2 Cor. xiii. 8). This brings us to one of the real milestones in the history of the organization of the early church, "the appointment of the seven" (see Acts vi. 1-7). One of those who were appointed "to serve tables" — the more modern office of deacon — was "Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit." And his zeal, courage, and martyrdom constitute the story of "THE FIRST MARTYR."

II. THE RECORD

Shows that, although Stephen was especially chosen to relieve those who desired to give their whole power to "the word of God," he was so full of grace and power that to his duties of daily ministering to the discontented dependants — widows and orphans, Jewish and Hellenist — he added disputation, so that his critics and antagonists from the various synagogues in Jerusalem "were not able to withstand the wisdom and spirit by which he spake."

They resorted therefore to the suborning of witnesses, that they might accuse Stephen of blasphemy "against Moses and God." The order in which they placed the objects of their reverence is significant. The brief and graphic account of his arraignment before the Sanhedrin closes with a picture, — a man lifted above all fear: "All they that sat in the council, fastening their eyes on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." The high priest demands his answer to "the false witnesses."

Then Stephen delivers an address which might be called a review of Jewish religion from the brave departure of "our father Abraham" from all his kindred down to the declaration that God is greater than tabernacle or temple (verses 48-50). At this point he arraigns his accusers as building and serving the Temple, and at the same time betraying every prophet of God sent to them until their latest crime, the betrayal and murder of his Master, Jesus, "the Righteous One." At this point they cut short his argument and appeal. But to his exalted spirit appears in vision "the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." This utterance was undoubtedly blasphemy from the standpoint of the Jew. So they cast him out of the city, and stoned him; while he prayed for his executioners, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Saul (not yet Paul) stands by, "keeping the garments" of the stone-throwers, and "consenting unto" Stephen's death.

III. SUGGESTED TOPICS.

1. Was there yet any church, as distinguished from the Jewish worship?
2. Give some account of the relations sustained among the believers in Christ as indicated in the necessity to appoint seven men "to serve tables."
3. Give an account of the relation of the synagogue to the Temple, and what distinguished one synagogue from another.
4. What was the Jewish council, and how was the examination of an offender conducted? Was the proceeding regular and proper in the case of Stephen? Compare with the trial of Jesus.
5. What bearing had Stephen's address upon the charge made against him?
6. Observe in the forgiving spirit of the martyr the test of his knowing the truth Jesus taught. (Compare 1 Tim. i. 13 and Acts xxii. 20.)

LESSON III.

WHAT PETER SAW ON THE HOUSETOP.

(Acts x)

LESSON TEXT.—“I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to Him.”—ACTS x. 35.

I. CONNECTING HISTORY.

The martyrdom of Stephen seems to have been the beginning of a period of persecution at Jerusalem. It is called (Acts viii. 1) a great persecution. Saul was conspicuous in it, as he himself confesses (read Acts xxii. 4, 5; xxvi. 9-11; Gal. i. 13). The violence of the persecution of Christian Jews by the old religion may be measured by the death of Jesus and the uncompromising devotion of the Jew to his religion.

The word “church,” used concerning the believers in the resurrection of Jesus and his Messiahship, must not mislead us to suppose that there was yet any separate Christian church organized in opposition to Judaism. It was an assembly of disciples of Jesus, enthusiastically devoted to his memory and conscious of his love. They hoped, as he also hoped, to bring Judaism out of its formality and deadness into vital spiritual relations to God. But the purpose was now defeated or indefinitely postponed, so far as Jerusalem is concerned, by the scattering of all the disciples, excepting the apostles, “throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria.” But their efforts to tell the good news of God are not suspended (Acts viii. 4).

The scene is now transferred to Samaria; and a new character appears in the history in the person of Philip, an evangelist “preaching good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ.” So powerful was the conviction attending his preaching that in Samaria not only “multitudes gave heed,” but there was “much joy in the city” over the good works of healing he accomplished; and even Simon, a noted sorcerer, joined himself to Philip as a disciple (Acts viii. 9-13).

The curious fact is developed at this point that the apostles, though unwilling to extend “the good tidings” to the Gentiles, were rejoiced to hear that the Samaritans, their ancient enemies, had confessed their faith in Christ (Acts viii. 14-17). Note in this connection the statement (Acts viii. 15-17) of a distinction between being “baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus” and a further stage of experience called “receiving the Holy Ghost.” This distinction has been made the ground of much un-Christ-like pretension upon the part of those who claim special prerogatives as “successors of the apostles.” “All such boasting is vain,” as well as unhistorical.

Next in the story of “The Acts” (viii. 26-40) is the beautiful incident of the conversion of the treasurer of Queen Candace, of Ethiopia, by the word preached to him by Philip. It is a very interesting recital, and is a connecting link in the chain of incident leading up to the announcement that Jesus is preached unto the Gentiles. It is worthy of note that the Revised Version of the New Testament omits, in Acts viii., verse 37. It does not occur in any of the four oldest MSS., and is probably carried over into the text of the New Testament from some later Liturgy.

II. THE RECORD.

The lesson which is now presented under the title "What Peter saw on the Housetop" represents a point in the journeying of Peter after his trip to Samaria to complete the work there begun by Philip. He had been at Lydda, where, it is said, he had cured a palsied sufferer named Æneas (Acts ix. 32-35). He then went to Joppa; and here is placed the oft-quoted scene in which Tabitha (or Dorcas, the gazelle) is resuscitated by the power of the apostle. Here Peter takes up his abode with a tanner named Simon; and there the messengers from Cæsarea deliver to him the request of Cornelius, the centurion of the Italian cohort, that he come to Cæsarea. Meantime Simon Peter has his peculiar vision of "the sheet let down from heaven" (see verses 9-16). When he awakes from his trance, he is summoned by the messengers and goes with them, and preaches to Cornelius and his friends the good news (verses 34-43).

III. SUGGESTED TOPICS.

1. Note the increasing emphasis laid upon the powers (miracles, signs) as the recital proceeds.

2. What inferences may be drawn from the characterization of Cornelius (verses 2, 4, 31) as to the relation of Cornelius to Judaism? Give some account of the influence of Judaism in Rome and Alexandria in the century before Christ and the first century of our era (see Schürer and Huidekoper).

3. State the distinction between clean and unclean beasts in the Jewish Code (Lev. xi.).

4. Note how entirely Jewish is the mind of Simon, as here portrayed, and how essentially non-Jewish is the account which is given.

5. Give some account of Cæsarea as a Roman centre of influence and its relation to Jewish feeling and habits.

6. Analyze the address of Peter in its Jewish prejudices and its Christian feeling. Note the new element in the declaration concerning the resurrection (verses 40, 41).

7. Follow the incident to its sequel in Acts xi. 1-18. Observe how Peter defends his course when it is called in question by the disciples in *Judea*. This is a very significant mark in the course of the developing mission of the apostles, and marks a departure in the origins of Christianity of the first importance. (See, on this matter of the Jerusalem-party and the preaching to the Gentiles, Baur's "Church History," vol. i.; Harnack's "History of Dogma," vol. i.; Sorley, Hibbert Lecture; Hatch; and especially Hausrath's "Times of the Apostles," vol. ii.).

8. Try to estimate what the religion of Jesus would have been if the "Church at Jerusalem" had prevailed over the preaching to the Gentiles. (Give some account of the Ebionite element in early Christianity.)

LESSON IV.

CONVERSION OF SAUL.

(Acts ix. 1-19.)

LESSON TEXT.—“He is to bear my name before Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.”—ACTS ix. 15.

I. THE RECORD.

The conversion of Saul seems to be one of the best authenticated facts of “The Beginnings of Christianity.” It is told as a part of the history in Acts ix. Saul, whose name is now Paul, makes it part of his defence (Acts xxii.) before the mob of Jews at Jerusalem, whom he calls “brethren and fathers.” In Acts xxi. 39 and xxii. 3-6 we get a preface for the abrupt beginning of Acts ix. Also the record is re-enforced and amplified by Acts xxiv., in which is Paul’s noble defence before King Herod Agrippa. Thus three times do we get the same account, and twice it is reported as a personal experience by the chief actor himself. Moreover, in other places, it is referred to as a history and as a spiritual experience. (Read Gal. i. 15-17; 1 Cor. xv. 8; Phil. iii. 7-11.)

II. THE INCIDENTS.

Saul’s training in Jewish learning as a disciple of Gamaliel. This is the Gamaliel who intercedes for the apostles with the notable saying, “If this be of man, it will come to naught; but, if it be of God, ye will not be able to overthrow them, lest haply ye be found to be fighting against God” (Acts v. 38, 39). Saul had not learned this lesson of his humane Teacher. “Saul was breathing out threatenings and slaughter.” “I thought I ought to do many things against the name of Jesus of Nazareth.” He held the raiment of those who stoned Stephen. Later, when he had been converted, Paul seems to understand Gamaliel’s teaching; for he declares (2 Cor. xiii.), “Ye can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.” He was thus shown to be *genuinely* “converted.”

Note the violent reaction of Jewish feeling, as seen in the systematic attempt to exterminate the new faith (Acts ix. 2, 13, 14; xxii. 5; ix. 21; xxii. 19, 20; Gal. i. 22, 23). Saul seems by these passages to have been, not simply the instrument of persecution, but its active promoter and the zealous enemy of the new faith, whose name was a terror to the church wherever it had gone after he had driven it out of Jerusalem.

III. THE CONVERSION.

We need not be troubled about the “bright light,” “the voice” which “spake Hebrew,” the blindness, the cure effected by Ananias. These all follow two well-established laws,—that the body suffers in every overwhelming upheaval of the moral nature, and that experiences of the life of the soul can only be preserved

and recited in the figures which are vivid to the imagination. What one man knows as a spiritual experience he can only make another man understand in dramatic presentation. What he felt, as plain as light, another man must see to feel at all. It is the peculiarity of history that it preserves the minute details of the processes of the mind as incidents out of which the experience of a later time constructs its philosophy of mind.

Conversion is a real experience in many minds, and the violence of its struggle will be determined by the previous resistance to the truth. Nothing would be more likely to rend the soul of a zealous Jew than to discover, that the very purpose of his beloved religion was fulfilled in the righteousness and obedience to the will of God, which those showed whom he persecuted.

That Saul was struggling with himself and against his reason is preserved in his saying that the heavenly Voice said, "It is vain for thee to kick against the goads." We are reminded that he saw the angel face of the martyr Stephen, heard his prayer for the forgiveness of his murderers, and had full knowledge of the repeated defences and arguments of the apostles to prove that Jesus was the sent of God, "the Messiah."

It is the final step of a long process which seems sudden. An earthquake is ages preparing, as the planet cools: "the shock" is sudden, not the process.

The naturalness of religion is seen in "the child who needeth no conversion," as Martineau says, but "who grows up into Christ," who ought "to pass from egotism to altruism" with the passage from childhood to adolescence.

This view is finely maintained by Stanley Hall, who urges such leading of the young soul to "love of the other" in religion as the young body and brain show as stages of their natural development. Long delay, continued selfishness of sin, hatred of goodness, and cruelty of practice make nature protest by convulsion against the violations of its laws of life. "Our wills are ours, to make them Thine!"

NOTE.—The new work by W. M. Ramsay, entitled "Saint Paul, the Traveller, and Roman Citizen," together with his earlier book, "The Church in the Roman Empire," should be in the hands of all advanced students. Upon this and subsequent lessons much excellent material may be gained by a close study of Hausrath's "Times of the Apostles." See also Weizäcker, "The Apostolic Age."

LESSON V.

THE PEOPLE WORSHIPPED THE APOSTLES.

(Acts xiv. 1-28.)

LESSON TEXT.—“The living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that in them is.”—ACTS xiv. 15.

I. SOME EVENTS.

Saul was compelled to flee from Damascus, to avoid death at the hands of the Jews whose persecution he now denounced who had been its agent. The new friends aided his escape from the old friends (Acts ix. 22-25). At this point the accounts seem contradictory. Acts ix. 26 follows the story of his escape from Damascus with the statement of the controversy over him at Jerusalem, where at first he is denied membership among the disciples, suspecting fraud until Barnabas, the son of consolation, vouched for his sincerity. But this Jerusalem visit is separated from the escape at Damascus by a space of three years according to Paul's own account (Gal. i. 17-24).

Paul's defence (Acts xxii. 17-21) refers to this visit to Jerusalem, and recites a vision in which he is warned of danger, but says nothing of any collision with the disciples of Jesus or their reluctance to believe his conversion. It is worthy of note that he mentions that his trance and vision were while he “prayed in the Temple.” Another break in the story occurs Acts xi. The first seventeen verses of this chapter are occupied by Peter's defence before the church at Jerusalem, in justification of his visit to Cornelius and his Gentile household. Verse 18 introduces abruptly the Gentile converts in Phœnicia, Cyprus, and Antioch in Syria, resulting from the preaching of those who had fled from Jerusalem after the martyrdom of Stephen.

The work of conversion now appears among the Hellenic Jews, converts probably to Judaism among the Greeks. The church at Jerusalem, or what was left of it, gathered around the apostles, hearing of the conversion of the Greeks, sent Barnabas to Antioch to investigate as to the genuineness of the work (Acts xi. 22-24). He becomes himself a preacher of the good news to the people of Antioch. He seeks out Saul at Tarsus (see the connection Acts ix. 30 with xi. 25, 26). They live at Antioch together with the new disciples “for a whole year” (Acts xi. 26).

Here is recorded the momentous statement, “The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.” The famine which is recorded (Acts xi. 27, 28) brings contributions to Jerusalem by the hand of Barnabas and Saul. So the mother church is fed from the new centres of the faith. Acts xii. records a fresh outburst of persecution at Jerusalem, instigated by the Jews and carried forward by Herod to please them. In this persecution “James, the brother of John,” was slain, and Peter was arrested. Read Acts xii. 1-24, which gives an account of the marvellous

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escape of Peter, and introduces a new actor on the scene in the person of John Mark (Acts xii. 12). This brings us (Acts xiii.) to the first missionary journey of Paul.

II. THE INCIDENT AT LYSTRA.

This gives us the title of the present lesson, and is quite similar, so far as its report of the cripple's cure, to that which was recorded in Lesson I. There is one significant phrase which appears in the case of the Lystra cure,—Paul “fastening his eyes on him and seeing that he had faith to be made whole.” The cripple's immediate and joyful response to the command of Paul, “Stand upright on thy feet!” seems to have carried the multitude to the sudden conviction, “The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men.”

They make a distinction between Barnabas and Paul which gives us a picture of them by contrast: “They called Barnabas ‘Jupiter’ (Greek, Zeus), and Paul ‘Mercury’ (Greek, Hermes), because he was the chief speaker.” The priest of Zeus immediately prepares to offer sacrifices to them. The horror of these two Jews is well described. At sight of these pagan preparations these believers in the unity and spirituality of God were excited to eloquent protest by their sense of the profanity of the proposed offering. The scene is very dramatic (Acts xiv. 14–18). The revulsion of feeling in the multitude is finely described (verses 19, 20).

III. SUGGESTED TOPICS.

1. The missionary journey should be followed from city to city upon a map of Southern Europe and Western Asia.

2. What can be said of the origin of the term “Christians” as first applied to the disciples of Jesus at Antioch? Would the term probably be used seriously or derisively?

3. Give some account of Antioch in Syria; its inhabitants as described satirically by Julian three centuries later in “The Haters of the Beard” (Misopogon).

4. Note the struggle in the mind of the apostles, Peter and Paul, before they could entertain the idea that God meant his “good tidings” for the Gentiles.

5. In this particular they seem to have forgotten the method of Jesus; and yet the Jerusalem Church had for its pastor “James, the Lord's brother.”

6. Do you think, after reading the Epistle of James, that it could have been produced by the narrow and exclusive Jerusalem Church who pursued Paul with their opposition?

7. Note the change from “Saul” to “Paul.” Can you account for it? Observe, also, how Barnabas and Paul change places as Paul gains in power.

8. Give some account of “Paul's personality” as gathered from the scattered references of the New Testament (2 Cor. iv. 7, 16; x. 10; 1 Cor. ii. 3, 4; 2 Cor. xii. 7; Gal. iv. 13, 14).

LESSON VI.

THE MEETING AT JERUSALEM.

(Acts xv. 1-29.)

LESSON TEXT — "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free."—
GAL. V. 1.

I. CONNECTING HISTORY.

Barnabas and Paul had made the round of the cities in which for the first time the "good news" of God had been proclaimed in the name of Jesus. Groups had been gathered in the cities of Syria and Asia Minor, Antioch, Lystra, Derbe, Iconium, Pamphylia; and now they had returned to the Syrian Antioch, whence they had set out. "And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all things that God had done with them, and how that he had opened a door of faith unto the Gentiles" (Acts xiv. 27).

While the disciples are entertaining the apostles, who instruct them in "the new way," certain men of the Jerusalem Church came down to Antioch, seeking to make the Gentile converts Jews before they would acknowledge them as fellow-disciples of Jesus (Acts xv. 1). Paul and Barnabas contend against this. Whereupon they and delegates from the Antioch group of disciples were sent to Jerusalem "unto the apostles and elders about this question" (verse 2).

This delegation seem to have settled the matter to their own satisfaction, as they announced in Phœnicia and Samaria, as they journeyed to Jerusalem, the conversion of the Gentiles causing "great joy unto all the brethren" (verse 3). Arrived at Jerusalem, the church is called together to settle the equality before God of the Jewish disciples of Jesus and those who had accepted Christ's law without fulfilling all the provisions of the law of Moses.

II. SIGNIFICANT TOPICS.

1. The disciples of Jesus were not yet a church separate from Judaism. That they should form groups of believers without going to school to the law of Moses, and submitting to all the rites of the Mosaic ritual, was difficult for the Jerusalem Church to appreciate. Do you think Jesus would have recognized this as a difficulty?

2. Note the fact that it is Simon Peter who appears in the Jerusalem meeting as the apostle of liberalism (verses 7-11). He refers to his visit to Cornelius, the centurion, as especially illuminating. That this was not his constant state of mind may be seen from Gal. ii. 11.

3. Note in Gal. ii. 1-10 Paul's account of this same meeting. The view he holds is not quite consistent with the account in Acts xv. In his account a new name appears. Titus, a Greek, is his companion; and the announcement that he is not a Jew,

THE MEETING AT JERUSALEM.

even by adoption, is specially mentioned (Gal. ii. 3). Also the time during which Paul had worked, without reference of his plans to the Jerusalem Church, is stated as "fourteen years" (verse 1). This throws light on the numbers of churches and the multitude at Jerusalem.

4. James, the minister of the Jerusalem Church, speaks (Acts xv. 13-21). He is probably the brother of Jesus. His brave plea for liberty from rites and ceremonies, and his exhortation to purity of life, sound like the Epistle general of James.

5. Observe the strong revulsion of feeling expressed in the letter quoted (Acts xv. 22-29). Paul and Barnabas are now "beloved." That there might be no mistake, Judas (possibly another brother of Jesus) and Silas are sent back to the Gentile cities, to reassure the new converts of the good will of their brethren in the Jerusalem Church.

6. The conflict was not at an end, but a long stride had been taken in advance toward the ideal of Jesus expressed in John's Gospel: "God is a Spirit, and they who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

7. The effect upon the church in Antioch is noted (Acts xv. 30-35)

III. SUGGESTIONS.

1. True religion cannot be limited by uniformity, but must be raised to unity. An expression of purpose is more than the adoption of a rite. This is the difference between a "covenant" and a "creed." Unity, not uniformity, is thus early made the ideal of the church.

2. Paul at Corinth says, when they are using his name to form a party and organize a division, "I thank God I baptized none of you" (see 1 Cor. i. 12-17); "for Christ sent me not to baptize," but to tell "good news." He thus teaches that it is better to advance an ideal than to found an institution.

3. Note that as yet there is no word about orthodoxy of teaching. Personal devotion to Christ and purity of life receive all the emphasis. Accuracy of definition and exact speculative results of doctrine have not yet appeared, to influence the hatred of one believer against another. Receiving the Holy Spirit and believing in the perfect life takes first place in the attention of the disciples. That Paul should have risen to this high conception of the religion of Jesus is the more remarkable, in that to the end of his days he calls himself a Pharisee. It is the higher Judaism of ethical passion rising above the plane of ceremonial zeal.

LESSON VII.

PAUL AND THE JAILOR.

(Acts xvi. 16-34.)

LESSON TEXT.—“My strength is made perfect in weakness.”—2 COR. xii. 9.

I. CONNECTING HISTORY.

We left Paul and “many others” (Acts xvi. 35) “teaching and preaching the word of the Lord” at Antioch, in Syria. We learn from Paul’s letter to the Galatians that Peter paid Antioch a visit about this time; and, though he had spoken at the meeting in Jerusalem with great liberality concerning the Gentiles who had become “disciples” without first becoming Jews, he and Paul had a sharp dispute, because Peter did not practise in his intercourse with Gentiles what he had preached, about the binding force of the law, (read carefully the fine passage on this subject, Gal. ii. 11-21, containing Paul’s declaration of independence).

We now reach the beginning of “Paul’s second missionary journey.” It opens with another time of disagreement between Paul and a brother, this time Barnabas. It seems rather trivial at this distance, but doubtless Paul had reasons for preferring Silas to Mark in this journey. We learn from the account (Acts xv. 36-40) that Mark, who was young and new to the work, had not been quite faithful under the rigors of the former trip,—“withdrew from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.”

Paul needed a companion who could be depended on. He was himself a sick man, liable to “seizures” of some sort, “whether in the body or out of the body” he “could not tell.” So Barnabas and Mark “sailed away unto Cyprus”; and Paul went through Syria and Cilicia, his old home. He revisited the churches at Derbe and Lystra, and discovered at Lystra Timothy, “the son of a Jewess who believed; but his father was a Greek.” The male side of the family seem not to have impressed Paul; but the mother, Eunice, and the grandmother, Lois, he commends highly for their training of Timothy (2 Tim. i. 5).

These references in the two letters to Timothy are very interesting as biographical hints; and, though the letters may not be Paul’s, they embody traditions in the churches concerning both Paul and his son in the gospel, his “true child in faith” (1 Tim. i. 2). Him Paul takes with him, but finds it expedient to subject him to the Mosaic rite, lest the fact that his father being a Greek should make him trouble (Acts xvi. 3, which seems rather inconsistent with verse 4). These two, together with Silas, took their journey “through the region of Phrygia and Galatia” (note the side-light cast by Acts xvi. 6). Trace the course to Troas, where Paul has the vision of one who besought him, “Come over into Macedonia, and help us!” In obedience to this “call” they went across the northern part of the Aegean Sea, sailing “a straight course to Samothrace, and the day following to Neapolis,” the port of Philippi in Macedonia, where the incidents of our lesson take place.

II. SUGGESTED TOPICS.

1. Observe the phrase, “We went forth without the gate by

a river side, supposing there was a place of prayer" (Acts xvi. 13: compare with Ps. cxxxvii.). The origin of the synagogue in exile may have left this feeling in Jewish minds, who on their holy day thus withdrew from their Gentile neighbors. The Jewish type of Christianity took the synagogue as its form of services.

2. Lydia who appears (verse 14) may be called "the first convert in Europe"; but she is a Jew by conversion, "whose heart the Lord opened" to the word spoken by Paul. Note her trade and its associations, and Lydia as a character study.

3. The "possessed" with the spirit of an oracle (divination) now appears on the scene, and is lost to her masters. The demoniac girl being healed of her "possession," they lost their possession in her. Their gain being taken away, they become persecutors.

4. Paul and Silas are arrested. Timothy and that other, who perhaps tells the story, seem not to have been victims of this mercenary outbreak of zeal for Roman law in a Roman colony (verses 19-21). Note the names borne by magistrates and officers here used, and the form of indictment and punishment.

5. Paul and Silas in their loathsome "inner prison" continued their devotion with zeal, "praying and singing hymns to God"; and the prisoners were listening to them when an earthquake shook the prison, so that the doors fell open and the chains were cast loose from their fastenings. There is no need to make this a miracle in answer to prayer. Earthquakes were too frequent in this volcanic formation of Southern Europe to make this singular. The effect upon the jailor (verse 27) shows that he understood the rigor of Roman military discipline, and, finding his prisoners safe, attributed the whole matter to these Jews who had power over the spirits, as seen in the case of the demoniac girl. This question, "What must I do to be saved?" is a tribute to the unusual character of these prisoners who worshipped a God he supposed had shaken the prison. Paul's answer is a summary of his message,— "To believe in Jesus is to believe in the God of Jesus."

6. The conduct of the Roman jailor (recited in verses 33, 34) is to be construed as a compassionate treatment within the prison. He evidently did not set them free.

7. Note how Paul stands upon his rights as a "Roman born" (verses 35-39), and yet does not pose as a martyr nor invade the peace of the city by remaining a cause of commotion (verses 39, 40).

LESSON VIII.

THE MOB AT THESSALONICA.

(Acts xvii. 1-9.)

LESSON TEXT.—“Rejoice evermore.”—1 THESS. v. 16.

I. THE HISTORY.

The narrative in the first person has been abandoned; and now “*they* pass through Amphipolis and Apollonia, and they came to Thessalonica.” This was the most important centre of trade in Macedonia. The apostles had gone by this time along one of the great highways—the Egnatian road—more than a hundred miles from the port Neapolis, where they first landed in Macedonia.

But they had not gone far inland. Crossing the small peninsula on which Amphipolis and Apollonia were situated, they again came to the sea at the head of the Thermaic Gulf, on which Thessalonica was built.

Thessalonica had the same mixed population that was found at Philippi,—Jews, natives, and Jewish proselytes here called devout Greeks. Paul had not separated himself from his religion, but seeks out the synagogue to bring to the Jews, his brethren, the Messiahship of Jesus. “For three Sabbath days” he “reasoned with them from the Scriptures, opening and alleging that it behooved the Christ to suffer and to rise again from the dead.”

II. PAUL’S WORK.

What Paul’s argument was we are at a loss to know, as the Jew of his day had no doctrine of “a suffering Messiah,” and the resurrection from the dead until the end of all things was not a doctrine held among them. His further demonstration that “this Jesus is the Christ (the Messiah)” was, on the Messianic hope of “the perfectly righteous man,” an easier task. The mission to the people of Thessalonica Paul describes in 1 Thess. i. and ii.

In this account he claims pagan converts,—“Ye turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God” (1 Thess. i. 9). This First Epistle to the Thessalonians disputes the first place in point of time as a New Testament document with the First Epistle to the Corinthians. The entering in unto the Thessalonians was not in vain. The experiences at Philippi are referred to (1 Thess. ii. 2). But it is not an easy task to work at Thessalonica. He speaks “the gospel of God in much conflict” (read the graphic account, 1 Thess. ii. 1-14).

An additional light is cast on Paul’s attitude to this group at Thessalonica in his reference (2 Thess. iii. 7, 8) to his “working night and day,” so that he might not “be a burden” to them nor “eat bread for nought at any man’s hand.” The kind of goat’s hair cloth with which Paul worked at tent-making was an ill-paid kind of labor. But every rabbi must have a trade. He had

learned under his Jewish teachers that the law is not to be used as an instrument to hew out a living.

There seems to have been a faithful group left at Philippi in spite of all he suffered there. He says not even Thessalonica was so thoughtful of his need as Philippi, which sent once and again even to Thessalonica relief to him (Phil. iv. 15, 16). The struggle at Thessalonica seems to have been due to the opposition of the Jews. Their state of mind is described as "being moved with jealousy" (Acts xvii. 5), evidently due to the success of Paul's preaching in convincing "a great multitude" of proselytes and "the chief women."

III. ANOTHER KING.

The co-operation of "the vile fellows of the rabble" is enlisted; and the mob stirs up the city on the score that the apostles have "turned the world upside down," and have proclaimed another king instead of Cæsar,—a king named Jesus (verse 7). This record clearly shows that the apostles were never understood to confuse God and Christ, else the Jews would have made the charge of blasphemy. Evidently, they had proclaimed the kingdom of heaven, and Jesus as its head. In this mob only Jason, the entertainer of the apostles, seems to have suffered. His house was assailed, and he was compelled to give security for the apostles.

"The brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night to Berea," a less well-known place inland. This place seems to have had Jews of more open mind, who have become an example to all time as those who "were more noble," receiving the word with readiness of mind, "examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so." Here the conversions were many (Acts xvii. 12). But the Jews of Thessalonica followed up their attack, and drove Paul out of Berea,—a flight which brought him to the sea, where he took ship to Athens.

LESSON IX.

PAUL AT ATHENS.

LESSON TEXT.—“In Him we live and move and have our being.”—**ACTS xvii. 28.**

I. THE SITUATION.

The last lesson shows us Paul's departure from Berea on his way to Athens. He left behind him Silas and Timothy, with instructions that they should follow him immediately. The lesson records the effect of the idolatrous city upon this devout Jew. It is recorded that “his spirit was stirred,” or provoked, “within him, as he beheld the city full of idols” (Acts xvii. 16). The idols, of course, were not simply objects of worship, but the beautiful statues, which were not so much the cause of Greek worship as the effect of Greek religion, a religion of art and beauty.

The Athens of the first century of our era was by no means the Athens of Pericles and Phidias, but the beauty which that flowering time of the fifth century before Christ had produced still remained; and Athens lived with gaze turned back upon the traditions of beauty and wisdom that belonged to its past. The effect on Paul seems to have been to so rouse his monotheistic faith in the unity and spirituality of God that he goes to the synagogue of his people to express there the burning zeal for pure religion, to which Athens seemed to him a most superstitious contrast.

Not content with expressing his indignation in the synagogue, he gathers around him a considerable crowd in the market-place; and, whilst he does not rudely attack their idolatry, he seeks to point them to the God whom they “ignorantly worship.” They could not have been ignorant of the God of the Jew, because in Athens were settled many Jews; but the contempt of the Greek for what Paul had to say is shown in the remarks of certain of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers, who came upon the crowd gathered about him and who asked, “What would this babbler say?” and others, “Has he brought us a new God?” because Paul spoke of Jesus and the resurrection, which might seem to them some new aspect of oriental religion. There is a keen comment upon Athenian society in Paul's day in verse 21, “had leisure for nothing else but either to tell or hear some new thing.” It is a true comment upon the unsettled condition of Greek society in the first century of our era; for it had ceased to achieve great things, and its philosophy had sunk into speculative curiosity.

II. TOPICS.

Paul appealed from idolatry to spiritual religion. Adroitly he calls their attention to that which had offended him, but does not speak of it in a way manifestly offensive. “I perceive that ye are very religious” may mean either satirically somewhat superstitious, or that religion takes up a large part of your thoughts. Paul's statement (verse 23) is a very keen thrust as coming from a Jew, to whom any image of worship was a horror and a distress,—“As I passed along and observed the objects of your worship”; it would be difficult to put into so few words a more complete summing up to the mind of the Jew, his opinion of the utter ineffectiveness of pagan religious observances. Still, among these he must find his text; for he teaches by an instinctive knowledge of the human mind, by a method both old and new, beginning with that which occupies the mind as a basis for adding to that some new element.

We cannot certainly say what the inscription “To an Unknown God” may have meant. It is quite possible that the Athenians themselves in the crowd gathered around Paul did not know its origin. Paul's use of it is, however, at once conciliatory and severe.

III. PAUL'S COURAGE.

He boldly takes hold of the suggestion in the inscription “TO THE UNKNOWN GOD” to declare that which in Christian

philosophy in its best aspects had always been understood, that the Infinite Power was superior to and larger than any of its manifestations, of which those beautiful statues in the Athenian streets were an effort at realization and description. Read verses 23-28 inclusive, and mark the strong utterances of the omnipotence, omnipresence, and eternal beneficence of God.

IV. PAUL'S APPLICATION OF HIS SUBJECT.

(Verse 29.) If God has made us, it is a vain thing to think that God is like anything that we can make. This is the literal conclusion which Paul arrives at, based upon the "gold and silver and stone graven by art and man's device"; but even now he does not speak of it as an offence against the being of God that he really felt it to be, but in an apologetic phrase (verse 30) he says, "The times of ignorance God overlooked." He does not say that the Jews had reached a monotheistic doctrine of deity, while the Greek, who despised the Jew as outlandish and barbarian, was trying to make something that would suggest God to his sense of beauty.

Note the conclusion introduced by the phrase (verse 30), "But now he commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent"; and in verse 31 he closes his argument by stating that the judgment in righteousness will be determined by the true representative of God among men,—namely, "the man whom God hath ordained,"—namely, Jesus of Nazareth, who becomes to Paul the ideal of divine beauty of character and the representative of God for "judgment in righteousness." In this phrase appears again the real source of apostolic inspiration,—namely, that this perfect character represented in life by Jesus of Nazareth had taken forever its place among the realities of their thought.

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth" (Col. iii. 1). This passage was addressed to living men, as describing a personal experience in human life, and is one of the illustrations of how the belief in the resurrection of Jesus, based first upon the empty grave, came to be a belief in *the resurrection as a spiritual experience, to be realized here and now.* (See Whiton's "Gospel of the Resurrection.")

V. THE EFFECT ON PAUL'S HEARERS.

"Some mocked," on account of Paul's speaking of "Anastasis," the rising up from the dead. These probably were the Epicureans, who were practically atheists. Others said, "We will hear thee again concerning this question." These must have been the Stoics, who were attracted by his claim that God had chosen a man to execute righteous judgment.

VI. SUGGESTED TOPICS.

Paul quotes from the poets, either from the *Phenomena* of Aratus or from the *Hymn to Zeus* by Cleanthes, the divine origin. The phrase that is left to us in the account is, "We are also his offspring." It might have been this passage from Aratus:—

"With Him, with Zeus, are filled
All paths we tread and all the marts of men;
Filled, too, the sea, and every creek and bay;
And all in all things need we help of Zeus,
For we, too, are his offspring."

(See Fenn on Acts.)

Paul's familiarity with Greek literature was perhaps not great, it would not have been natural to a Jew of his type to go very deeply into pagan literature; but that he had some knowledge of it is quite probable, as he was a citizen of the Greek city Tarsus, in which there was a university, and, being "free-born," he may have had a certain amount of pagan learning added to his Rabbinical training. Still further consider the method of Jewish education outside of the Jerusalem-influence.

LESSON X.

REVIEW.

I. GENERAL FACTS.

The lessons which have been studied display the early state of that progress of religion which was to give to the world Christianity. It has been pointed out that neither in the mind of Jesus nor of his immediate apostles was there any purpose to set up a *separate church*, in the modern sense of that word. The purpose of Jesus was to bring about a spiritual religion,—to bring to its full flower and fruitage the ethical passion and spirituality of the seed of truth, so long implanted in Jewish souls. The apostles took up his work at his death, inspired by (1) his profoundly spiritual teaching especially the Fatherhood of God, never so fully presented before; (2) the firm conviction that Jesus was as much alive after death as he was before, and was really present with them; (3) that the Lord, whom they loved, would appear to them again in the clouds of heaven and establish the kingdom of God on earth, ruled by his Messiah; (4) the possibility of establishing, among their people and in the world at large, a proper state, which should be ready for the coming of Christ. Moved by these inspiring considerations, they started, first at Jerusalem and then further afield, to tell the "good news."

II. CHAPTERS OF THE STORY.

In Lesson I. we find the disciples of Jesus still worshipping in the Temple at the regular Jewish service, apparently unsuspected of being other than devout Jews, although Jerusalem had been stirred up by demonstrations upon their part, which are called in the story "the descent of the Holy Spirit." This new endowment from On High seems to have made them the instruments of healing power, as their Master was; and in the first lesson we find them performing a notable work of cure upon a man past middle life, who was a cripple. Quite as remarkable in this lesson as the recovery of the sick was the recovery of Simon Peter and the others of the courage which they seemed to have lost.

Compare the sermon of Simon Peter in Acts iii. with the sermon of Stephen in Acts vii. In this comparison we will discover the method by which the Jewish scriptures were made the basis for the inspiring teaching of the apostles concerning the new faith.

III. THE SIGNIFICANT POINT OF THE STORY OF THE FIRST MARTYR

Is the charge made by Stephen upon the Jews, that they had betrayed every prophet of good who was sent them, and had made their latest crime the betrayal and murder of his Master, Jesus, the righteous one. We must try to put ourselves at the standpoint of the Jewish Zealots, who would find it impossible to endure this charge. Another significant matter in this lesson is the social condition in which the new group of believers in the religion of Jesus found themselves, which made it necessary to appoint "the seven to serve tables." The office of "Deacon" in this early development of Christianity must not be confounded with the modern sense in which we use that word; as, indeed, there is scarcely anything in the modern church as to its usage or rites which has justification in the observances of the period we are now studying.

Up to this time not even a separate day for religious observance had been adopted; and the Jewish Sabbath was observed strictly by the disciples, who upon the next morning might gather for their love feast (*agape*), and then went about their work on a day which later the Greek Church set apart as a day to be given wholly to worship and rest.

IV. IN THE HOUSETOP VISION

Of Simon Peter we get the first revelation to the Jewish mind that the Gentiles are included in the Fatherhood of God. It is led up to by the increasing emphasis upon "signs" and "powers" reported of the apostles. A light is thrown in this lesson upon the relation of Judaism to the Roman world, and its influence upon Roman and Greek life in the century before Christ. An intimation is also given, in this curious story of "the sheet let down from heaven," of how, even in a trance, a Jewish mind will make the distinction which had been so long held between "things clean and unclean" ceremonially, in entire forgetfulness of the appeal of humanity to be cleansed.

V. THE CONFLICT IN THE SOUL OF SAUL

Comes to its crisis in Lesson IV., where the conversion of the enemy of the disciples of Jesus seems as complete as it is sudden, and may be contrasted with the lingering prejudice of Simon Peter, who professed a conversion from Jewish exclusiveness to sympathy with the Gentiles. We are now introduced to the apostle of the Gentiles, and we have a very striking opportunity to study the psychic and ethical element involved in what is known as "conversion" and "regeneration." In this connection read Romans vii. and viii., in which Paul seems to state in terms of spiritual struggle what in Lesson IV. is given in terms of dramatic incident.

VI. PAGAN ENTHUSIASM

Appears in Lesson V. as much more easily impressed than Jewish prejudice; for the apostles, now Barnabas and Paul, are supposed by the people of Lystra to be Zeus and Hermes, working wonders before their very eyes. The cordiality of their reception of divine visitants is equalled by the revulsion of feeling, described in Acts xiv. 19, 20, when it is discovered that they are only men. It reminds one of the emotional protest made by people who have always believed that Jesus was a God, when at last they are intellectually convinced that he is human.

VII. THE MEETING AT JERUSALEM

Is full of significance for the conflict between the Jewish origin of Christianity and its new development, but it has been much overworked as "the First Council" of the Christian Church by those who cannot believe that God reveals anything except to a regularly organized assembly. State again clearly the difference between UNITY and UNIFORMITY.

VIII. THE SORROWS OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

Are still further brought out in Lesson VIII., distresses which he enumerates as belonging to his career in 2 Cor. vi. 5 and xi. 23, 24.

NOTE.—During these ten lessons we have passed through a period of perhaps fifteen years or a little more; and during this time groups of disciples of Jesus have been converted at Rome, Athens, Corinth, Thessalonica, Antioch in Syria, and Antioch in Pisidia, and other centres of civilization, ranging from Rome to Damascus, a condition of things which is justified and verified by the ecclesiastical writers of the second and third centuries, and for which the Book of Acts is the only record purporting to deal as contemporary history with the century's events.

LESSON XI.

PAUL AT CORINTH.

(Acts xviii. 1-18.)

LESSON TEXT.—“I planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.”—1 COR. iii. 6.

I. THE SITUATION.

Paul, having left Athens, went to Corinth. Corinth was at this time a great commercial centre, having been rebuilt by the order of Julius Cæsar B.C. 46 and settled by veterans of Rome and Roman freedmen, and was a point of entry and exit between Western Europe and Asia. It had all the activities of a commercial centre in which all nationalities collected, and it had the licentiousness and vice which such an assemblage in the first century of our era made probable. (“To Corinthianize” meant to corrupt, to deprave.) It had been destroyed in the year 146 B.C. by Mummius, for the part which it had taken in the Achaian League. Paul evidently refers to the fact of its destruction and rebuilding, in which much old material was mixed with new, in 1 Cor. iii. 10-15,—a very suggestive figure when taken in connection with the result of his visit there (see W. W. Fenn’s “Lessons on the Acts”). In 1 Cor. xvi. 15 he speaks of the household of Stephanus as “the first-fruit of Achaia unto Christ,” which seems a contradiction of Acts xvii. 34, where it is said “certain persons believed in Athens, and came unto Paul.” The Epistles to the Corinthians are much more reliable as history than the Book of Acts, as a whole. It may be supposed that Paul’s work at Athens was, so far as converts were concerned, a failure, although it may be possible that in the account in Acts a distinction must be allowed (which appears elsewhere) between those who “believed” and those who were swept by the outpouring of the spirit into active missionary effort. Paul’s depression of spirits may have had physical grounds as well as personal, for he had passed through very trying scenes, and his very precarious health is registered again and again. “The thorn in the flesh” and the state of “ecstasy” and “trance” mark an excitable condition, probably epileptic; and such a state of health must have had its times of extreme melancholy.

While at Corinth Paul writes his first letter to Thessalonica, and sends Timothy with it (read the first letter to the Thessalonians). This letter seems to have been inspired by the report which Timothy brought of the good condition of the church in Thessalonica. Paul seems not only to have been much depressed at this time, but extremely poor, and to have found such an attitude towards himself upon the part of his countrymen at Corinth, that he depends upon his handicraft for a living, until Silas and Timothy return to him, bringing a contribution from the church of Philippi, and encourage him by good news concerning the Thessalonians.

II. INCIDENTS.

We get the point of chronology in this lesson, that Aquila and his wife, Jews from Italy, had been driven out of the city of Rome by a decree of the Emperor Claudius. Claudius was emperor not later than A.D. 54; and, as the earlier part of his reign was marked by indulgence of the Jews, this edict must have been late in his reign, and is placed probably in the year 53 A.D. We are thus able to fix a date for Paul’s presence at Corinth, some nineteen or twenty years after the crucifixion of Jesus. Upon the arrival of Silas and Timothy, Paul undertakes to do in the Jewish synagogue at Corinth what he had undertaken to do at Athens, and found them quite as unwilling, as the Athenian Jews, to hear what he has to say with regard to the Messiahship of Jesus (verse 6). “They opposed themselves and blasphemed.”

PAUL AT CORINTH.

The extreme importance of this struggle to proclaim the Christ to the Jews at Corinth arises from the fact that Paul is represented as making a distinct breach between himself and the Jews by the statement (verse 6), "Your blood be upon your own heads, I am clean (or clear), from henceforth I go unto the Gentiles." It seems that he immediately set out for a Hellene Jew, named Titus Justus, and cast himself upon his hospitality (verse 7). At this point Paul is encouraged by one of his visions to be yet more bold, and as a result he is represented by them as dwelling at Corinth for eighteen months and to have converted a very large number of people by his preaching.

Another interesting character appears in this lesson in the introduction of the proconsul of Achaia, Gallio, the brother of Seneca,—that Seneca who in Nero's reign was to become the tutor and guide of Nero's youth. A very interesting side-light is thrown upon the feeling of the Romans of the upper class with respect to the Jews whom they encountered in the Greek province (see verses 12-17).

An interesting inquiry arises as to the identity of the new ruler of the synagogue, Sosthenes, who seems to have succeeded Crispus in that office, and the Sosthenes mentioned by Paul in 1 Cor. i. 1 as "the brother." In the story in the Acts we find the mob beating Sosthenes because he is a Jew, and in the epistle we find him associated with Paul as a disciple, supposing this to be the same person.

III. TOPICS FOR STUDY.

(1) Trace the history of Corinth from the middle of the second century B.C. to the time of our lesson, about two hundred years. (2) Show the manner of administration by the Roman imperial power of the outlying provinces, and distinguish between senatorial and imperial provincial control. To which class did Achaia belong? (3) How does the character of Gallio, which is drawn in this lesson, compare with that of Seneca, as we gather it from his writings? (4) The general character of the church at Corinth may be determined by the letters of Paul to the Corinthians written at a later date (for this purpose read carefully 1 Cor. i. 14-16; ii. 1, 5; iii. 1-16; ix. 11, 12; 2 Cor. xi. 7, 9). (5) How can we reconcile the purity and integrity of the teaching of Paul concerning the life of his Master, Jesus of Nazareth, with the character of the Corinthian church here shown, and what light is thrown upon the claims of those who exalt the immaculate purity and perfect enlightenment of early Christianity as a reason for return to it? (6) Examine the relative value as documents of the First Epistle to the Corinthians and the First Epistle to the Thessalonians with the Epistle to the Philippians and Colossians.

NOTE.—For this lesson consult "Epistles to the Corinthians," by John Hamilton Thom; "The Witness of the Epistles," by Knowling; and Stanley's "Epistles to the Corinthians." For the struggle between purity and impurity in this period, see Uhlhorn's "Conflict of Christianity and Heathenism." Consult also the "Epistles of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians," written the latter part of the first century.

LESSON XII.

BURNING THE BOOKS.

LESSON TEXT.—“Speaking truth in love, may grow up in all things.”—EPH. iv. 15.

I. CONNECTING HISTORY.

The last lesson described the experience of Paul in Corinth. In order to visit Antioch in Syria, Paul left Corinth, having escaped from the contentions of the Greeks and Jews; “but Gallio cared for none of those things.” On his way to Antioch he is accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila.

It is mentioned in parenthesis “that at Cenchreæ either he or one of his companions registered the fulfilment of a vow by cutting his hair.” It is not made clear whether it was Paul or Aquila. Too much stress has been laid upon this as an inconsistent action, but we must see that the new “liberty with which Christ had made them free” trailed after it many of their former bonds of tradition and habit.

On the way they stop at Ephesus, where his companions remain. He goes there to address the Jews in their synagogue, but refuses this time to remain, and proceeds to Cæsarea; and after a brief conference with the church there he went down to Antioch.

He seems to have returned from Antioch by land, journeying through Galatia and Phrygia, and reaches Ephesus, where he finds Apollos, a disciple of John, eloquent and learned in Scripture. Apollos seems not to have known that Jesus had succeeded John in the work of the Spirit. He was preaching in the synagogue to the Jews, evidently a Jewish convert and having a special gift of Scriptural interpretation, which marked the Alexandrian school of Jewish thought. It is a tradition of the church that he became Bishop of Corinth. It is said that Priscilla and Aquila discovered in his preaching, with all its eloquence and learning, a serious defect, and they took him aside and “expounded unto him the way of God more carefully.” He is sent to Corinth with letters of recommendation to the disciples in the church there, and seems now to have, as the substance of his preaching, the Messiahship of Jesus.

The foregoing incidents seem to have occurred on Paul’s reaching Ephesus the second time. Apollos has already gone to Corinth when he arrives, but he perceives some twelve men among the disciples there, who were in the same state of mind that Apollos showed; namely, they had been baptized in the discipleship of John, but had not known of Jesus nor his teaching, nor of the Holy Spirit. These Paul instructed, as his companions had instructed Apollos, resulting in great enlargement of their powers by the coming of the Holy Spirit upon them.

Paul now begins his serious work of teaching at Ephesus, “reasoning and persuading the things concerning the coming of God.” He begins in the synagogue. It must not be forgotten that in every case the word of Jesus is observed by these disciples, that they should begin at Jerusalem; but it is recorded that at Ephesus there were those who were hardened and contentious, and “spoke evil of the WAY” before the multitude. So Paul gathers together those that believed in Jesus from among the Jews of the synagogue, and transfers his instructions to the school of a rhetorician, the philosopher named Tyrannus (1 Cor. vi. 8, 9).

BURNING THE BOOKS.

It is said that at Ephesus special "powers" appeared in the hands of Paul, that Paul's garments were carried away by believers because of the healing influence that proceeded from them. That some very significant and unusual influence attended upon his ministry is conveyed by the fact that Jewish exorcists attempted an imitation of his works, and conjured with the name of Jesus, using this formula: "I abjure you by Jesus, whom Paul preacheth."

The story says that seven of these were of one family, the father being of the Jewish hierarchy, a man named Sceva. In the midst of their attempt to work with another man's power, two of them are mastered and beaten by a demoniac, who replies to their formula, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?" The natural result of this incident appears in the narrative: "Fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified."

II. TOPICS FOR STUDY.

1. Read the letter to the churches of Galatia and the first letter to the church at Corinth, in connection with this part of the history.

2. Study the sixteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, which introduces Phœbe, a deaconess of Corinth, to the church at Ephesus. That chapter will give us the names of twenty-six persons who belonged to the group of believers at Ephesus, besides others who are referred to as belonging to their household. It will be seen by this chapter that they were of different social position and different nationality. Most of them seem to have been slaves, and the whole situation at Ephesus indicates that Paul's converts were from the lower ranks of social life.

It gives point to his saying (read 1 Cor. i. 26-31). By comparing references to this period touching Ephesus and Corinth, we shall discover how much more reliable the witness of the Epistles is than that of the Book of Acts; and there is much to justify the claim of Weizsäcker respecting Acts ("Apostolic Age," vol. i. p. 404): "The purpose of the narrative is rather to show that the faith in Christ of the Jewish Christians required the Pauline doctrine to raise it to the true spiritual faith and to invest its followers with the Holy Ghost." He argues from such incidents as the number twelve, of those whom Paul instructed in the higher teaching, an allegorical reference to the new apostolate.

3. Carefully read Acts xix. 11-26, xx. 18-35; 1 Cor. iv. 11-13, xvi. 3-11; and turn back to Acts ii. and read the account of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the first disciples. We get also more of the familiar names in 2 Tim. iv. 10-21.

4. Examine the character of the Jewish teaching, which the Alexandrian school had inherited from Philo and his disciples, and observe that the work of John the Baptist had reached so far afield as Alexandria, and gives to this narrative the figure of Apollos, equipped with the Alexandrian learning and its peculiar Messianic hope. How does this bear upon the supposition that Apollos was the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews?

LESSON XIII.

DIANA AND HER SILVERSMITHS.

(Acts xix. 23-41.)

LESSON TEXT.—“Walk by the Spirit.”—GAL. V. 16.

I. THE SITUATION.

Paul is still at Ephesus. The success of his work appears in the complaints that Demetrius and his craftsmen make, “that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that there be no gods which are made with hands.”

We get in this some measure of the power of Paul as a preacher and the reasonableness of the religion which he presented, for the worship of the pagan deities in Asia Minor was more seductive than at Greece or Rome in the time which we are considering. Whatever the worship lacked in dignity and impressiveness it made up in debauchery and viciousness. Paul now comes face to face with the “great goddess Diana,” and confronts this many-breasted figure of Artemis (the symbol to the mind of Asia Minor of fruitfulness in nature) with the simple announcement of the good news concerning the Fatherhood of God.

The complaints of the silversmiths are unquestionably sincere, when they say that the great goddess Artemis is likely to be made of no account, and that Paul claims she should even be “deposed from her magnificence, whom all Asia and the inhabited earth worships.” The strong probability is that Paul had expressed himself in terms not easily mistaken concerning that greatest horror of the Jewish mind,—the polytheistic worship; for the Jew, as the Mohammedan, regards the greatest possible crime to be calling “the great ONE two.” It is quite possible that Paul, like his Master, Jesus, regarded the Jewish Shemah as a proper introduction to all commandments touching life; and, as Jesus, so doubtless Paul in his discourses, cried out to the Jews of the company, “Hear, O Israel, Jehovah God is ONE.”

The scene of contest is now transferred from Jewish bitterness to pagan superstition; and the city is filled with confusion, while they seize Gaius and Aristarchus, men who had come with Paul from Macedonia, and the crowd rush into the theatre with the prisoners in the midst. With characteristic courage Paul demands to go to the rescue of his companions, but those who are with him persuade him not to take the risk. He seems to have made friends among the Asiarchs (representative citizens who had charge of public festivals in Ephesus), who joined their persuasions to those of his immediate disciples, though they were probably not disciples of Jesus themselves; and a scene of dire confusion results.

The crowd looked about them for some one to state the case against Paul and his companions, and pushed to the front a certain Alexander, who is about to urge a course of action more peaceable. But when they perceive that he also is a Jew, as Paul is, they cry him down with their partisan cry, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians”; or perhaps their ejaculation was meant to summon help from the divinity herself, and is to be rendered “Greatest

Artemis!" What Alexander seems not to have been allowed to do, the recorder of the city succeeds in doing; and the multitude are quieted. He pleads with the multitude to remember how Ephesus, as a city, is the guardian of the Artemis cult,—that is, sacristan of the great goddess Artemis. He seeks to procure order by means of awakening their pride in their city, and their confidence that nothing can happen to their goddess that would imperil her worship. Like a faithful city official, he urges that the courts are open, and that there is a representative of the empire, to whom appeal may be made if any wrong had occurred. The security of Roman law appears in every phrase of the recorder, and a dread of disorder which was contrary to Roman discipline. The assembly is dismissed by the sagacious recorder, and Paul turns his face toward Macedonia.

II. TOPICS FOR STUDY.

1. Give an account of the myth of Diana (Artemis), and show wherein the Ephesian representative of this divinity differed from the classic deity of the same name.

2. Give some account of the kind of dramatic performances indicated here by the word "theatre," and name the chief playwrights preceding this time, whose plays might be enacted in this very spot.

3. Acts xx. 4-6 will furnish further information with regard to Paul's companions at Ephesus and on the way to Macedonia.

4. Give some account of the method of administration of a proconsular city, such as Ephesus was, and its relations to the central authority at Rome.

5. References to the situation at Ephesus may be gathered from 1 Cor. xv. 30-32 and 2 Cor. i. 8, 9.

6. Let there be a full discussion of the conflict which arose between the self-interest of the silversmiths and the imperilling of the religion to which the people were devoted. One must bear in mind a condition of things which this incident will illustrate, and which is expressed by Gibbon in satirical phrase,— "That all religions at Rome were regarded by the people as equally true, by the philosophers as equally false, and by the magistrates as equally serviceable." Observe in this connection how the different elements interpenetrated one another in this account,— Paul, a Jew; Alexander, a Jew, not of Paul's party; Asiarchs, Greeks friendly to Paul. All displayed some concern about the city,— careful administrators of the city's peace by different methods, artisans concerned about their trade, and the common people guided by pride of the distinction of Ephesus as sacristan (temple-keeper) of Diana.

7. The practical lesson is unavoidable that it is a sign of sincerity to subordinate all matters of self-interest to the truth that is perceived; but, on the other hand, the perception of truth is a test of character, and of our interests also. Even those of the spiritual life are sometimes found in the way of an entire openness of mind. Let us beware of condemning the silversmiths' anxiety about their trade, unless we are prepared to repudiate the influence of trade as it appears in matters economic, civic, and personal in our own immediate and present life. The chief proof of an educated man is his *ability to judge of things on their merits*, free from personal considerations or traditional prejudices. This insures him as having passed out of the class of *imitators* into the class of *creators* of thought.

LESSON XIV.

BIDDING FAREWELL TO PAUL.

(Acts xx. 1-38.)

LESSON TEXT.—“Now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love.”—1 COR. xiii. 13.

I. CONNECTING HISTORY.

After the uproar with the silversmiths Paul withdrew from Ephesus, passing up through the islands of the Ægean Sea to Troas on the western coast of Mysia. Here he seems to have expected to find Titus, who had evidently gone to Corinth to examine into the condition of the church there, and, if possible, to harmonize the conflicting parties. (See 2 Cor. ii. 12, 13, and 2 Cor. vii. 5, 7.)

Paul's anxiety leads him to cross over into Macedonia, possibly suspecting that Titus might have determined to meet him at some other point. Here he finds the messenger whom he had sent to Corinth. After this Paul seems to have gone to Corinth for what must have been his third visit (2 Cor. xiii. 1). Relieved in mind as to the situation of the Corinthian church, where it seems that the several contending parties had been reduced to two, and the stronger party had disciplined some one who was especially obnoxious to Paul, Paul seems now to have determined to make an extended journey, which would take him from Macedonia to Jerusalem, and then as far west as Spain, taking Rome by the way. (See Rom. xv. 23, 26.) He seems to have spent three months in Greece, but discovers a plot against him by the Jews, and, instead of sailing direct to Syria on his way to Jerusalem, he returns through Macedonia. (Acts xx. 2-5, naming all the company that went with him, or waited for him on the road.) He seems to have returned to Troas in five days, and to have stayed there a week. Verses 7 to 12 include the incident of the young man who fell asleep and fell from the window, upon whom Paul worked an act of resuscitation. The account declares “he was taken up dead”; but Paul says, “His life is yet in him.” The only matter of special import in that part of the story is that it shows us that the first day of the week, our present Sunday, is the day on which the disciples gathered for their love feast and eucharist, in memory of the death and resurrection of Jesus; that they were in an upper room, as at the Pentecostal time; that it was a social as well as a religious gathering. The mention of the “many lights” in the chamber might possibly be a tacit contradiction of the common report that at their meetings they did “deeds of darkness.” Paul's companions, who were going with him to the feast at Jerusalem, sailed to Assos, on the other side of the peninsula on which Troas is situated. Paul seems to have walked across and joined them there (see Acts xx. 13-16). The route is given by way of the islands of Chios and Samos to Miletus.

Paul declined to stop at Ephesus; but having reached Miletus he holds a meeting with the elders of the church of Ephesus, who go to him, and with whom he holds the affecting scene of farewell with which this lesson is concerned.

II. TOPICS FOR STUDY.

1. Review the condition of the Corinthian church, name the parties and give the significance of each, and by careful examination of the second Epistle to the Corinthians see if you can determine whether there were two or three or four "letters to the Corinthians" written by Paul.

2. The Epistle to the Romans belongs to this period probably; for in it he promises a visit to Rome, where the church is already established, though he had never been there. What is the church tradition with regard to the establishment of the church at Rome?

3. Acts xx. 13-16, note the change of recital to the "first person."

4. Since Paul's danger arose from the Jews, who at every point are the instruments of suffering and disappointment to him, why should he go to Jerusalem at a time when he was sure to meet opposition, of which he feels the greatest dread, so that it is not even safe for him to travel with the Jewish pilgrims from Philippi?

5. Analyze the tender speech of Paul to the elders at Ephesus, when he meets them at Miletus. Give the biographical and spiritual significance of it.

6. Note that elders, or presbyters, and bishops seem to be the same in the church at Ephesus. There are more bishops than one in a church which, as yet, does not know the later condition of having many churches under one bishop. (See Acts xx. 17-28.) Observe the purely congregational character of the organization.

7. In verse 28 occurs a much discussed text,—“The church of God (or the Lord) which he hath purchased with his own blood.” Some of the oldest manuscripts give the word “God,” others the word “Lord.” The primary meaning of the Greek verb translated “purchase” is “to acquire.” The probability is that the word “Lord” should be used, referring to Jesus,—the church of the Lord which he acquired at the cost of his life. In any event, there is no reference here to any “commercial theory” of atonement, which was not known in its present form until a thousand years later.

8. Compare Pliny's letter to Trajan, respecting the worship of the Christians of the first century, with Acts xx. 7-12.

9. Note the saying of the Lord Jesus quoted by Paul in Acts xx. 35. This is not in any of the gospels, except by implication, but doubtless was current, as many others that have been lost were “sayings of the Lord.” A notable instance occurs in a manuscript of the sixth century, Codex Bezae (D), in reference to the man who worked in his field on the Sabbath.

LESSON XV.

ONCE MORE IN JERUSALEM.

(Acts xxi. 17-36.)

LESSON TEXT.—“If we suffer, we shall also reign.”—2 TIM. ii. 12.

I. CONNECTING HISTORY.

After the touching farewell at Miletus with the church there and those who had come from Ephesus, Paul took ship and proceeded upon his journey to Jerusalem by a course which is laid down very clearly in Acts xxi. 1-9, including the mention of the following places,—Coos, Rhodes, Patara. Cyprus is seen on the left hand; and the ship speeds on towards Syria, and makes a landing at Tyre, her freight being for that place. Another reason might have been given; namely, that on the Phœnician coast were not only the centres of trade, but also practically the only good harbors.

There seems to have been a group of disciples of Jesus at Tyre; but they must have been obscure, for the phrase is used, “and *having found* the disciples, they tarried there seven days.” These had a full knowledge of what was going on at Jerusalem, and besought Paul not to take the risk of going up to encounter either the Jerusalem church or the enraged Jewish population there.

Apparently they were very much afraid of the journey on his account; and the pathetic picture is made (Acts xxi. 5, 6) of how these disciples, with their wives and children, followed him out of the city and down to the beach, where they gathered around him while he prayed, and saw him embark upon what they felt would be a very dangerous errand.

The ship seems to have had a coast trade with other places on the coast of Syria, and proceeded next to Ptolemais, about thirty miles south of Tyre, where there is also found a group of disciples of Jesus. There Paul conferred with during the single day that the ship stayed there, and then set sail for Cæsarea, about thirty miles further south.

The significance of the stop at Cæsarea, where Paul stayed some days, turns upon the residence there of the man whom we met in the earliest of these lessons in the Book of Acts,—namely, Philip. (See Acts vi. 5, 6, also Acts viii. 26-39.) Philip had carried on his work of evangelization,—that is, he was a travelling preacher; and the inspiration of his religious power seems to have been inherited or conveyed to all of his family (Acts xxi. 9). Here occurs the dramatic incident of Agabus (Acts xxi. 10-12). But in spite of all hindrances Paul proceeds, expressing a firm resolve (verses 13 and 14). This brings the recital to the point of Paul's arrival at Jerusalem.

II. TOPICS FOR STUDY.

1. The reception at Jerusalem by the Christian brethren, here called Nazarenes, among whom the minister of the church,

James (the brother of Jesus, probably), does not seem at first to appear. On the next day a formal reception of the visiting brethren from the Gentile world is appointed, and Paul has to give an account of what his course of ministry has been (Acts xxi. 17-19).

2. Evidence of the growth of the Jerusalem church is given (verse 20) where it is said that all the rites and customs which they had observed as Jews they still observed, and they asked for a statement from Paul as to the charge made against him that he had taught the Jews among the Gentiles to leave the law and customs of Moses. Can you say how far this charge was based on fact as to Paul's personal behavior?

3. What is the significance of the test which they proposed (verses 23-26)? Give some account of the system of vow-making and purification, and mark the distinction made in the text between Jews who had become disciples of Jesus, and Gentiles who had become disciples of Jesus.

4. Give a description of the ground plan of the temple courts, as affording an explanation of the offence which Paul is said to have committed (verses 27-30) in the matter of Trophimus.

5. Describe the provision for keeping order upon the part of the Jews and the Roman garrison in the temple and city. What is the proper title of the officer, here called chief captain (verse 31)? Verse 32 indicates that the uproar was wide-spread and very threatening, as a whole cohort was called out (see verses 31, 32). The misapprehension as to Paul's character may be gathered from verse 38. Who is the Egyptian referred to there (see Josephus, "Antiquities," chap. xx.)?

6. Paul seems to have surprised the chiliarch by speaking to him in Greek, and asking for an opportunity to address the people from the platform of the stairs leading to the castle of Antonia; but, when he turns to address the people, he speaks to them in the common speech of Jerusalem,—namely, Aramaic. What is the difference between Hebrew proper and the Hebrew spoken by Paul?

7. Read carefully Acts xxii. 1-21, and note the argument so clearly presented to the Jewish audience, reserving all mention of Gentiles until the argument drawn from his personal history closes.

Note he uses the old name "Saul." Observe that this account of his conversion differs from that given in Acts ix. and xxvi.

8. Explain the significance of Paul's standing by his rights as a Roman citizen when he is about to be scourged. Give an account of the system of making freedmen under the earlier and the later emperors. Contrast the Roman commander's statement that his citizenship cost "a great sum," and Paul's statement that he is "a Roman born" (verse 28).

9. Examine carefully the arraignment of Paul before the Sanhedrin (Acts xxiii. 1-10) and the evidence given there, with the account as written for others than Jews, as seen in the definition of the Sadducees and Pharisees by the writer. It seems probable that Paul purposely gave cause for the uproar, in order that he might be protected by the Romans from his own countrymen.

10. Acts xxiii. 12-35 sheds further light upon the situation in Jerusalem, and should be read with care and explained minutely.

LESSON XVI.

PAUL BEFORE AGRIPPA.

(Acts xxv., xxvi.)

LESSON TEXT.—“A conscience void of offence toward God and men alway.”—ACTS xxiv. 16.

I. CONNECTING HISTORY.

Paul had thrown the Sanhedrin into confusion by setting the Sadducees and Pharisees against each other, by declaring that he believed in the resurrection of the dead. The violence of the dispute over him may be seen from the fact that the Roman guard is represented as rescuing him a second time from the Jews, and by implication invading the part of the Temple where the Sanhedrin was convened (Acts xxii. 9, 10).

Paul now, in one of his “visions” is assured that he must not only appear for the truth at Jerusalem, but that he must carry his word to the very centre of Roman power itself. This vision will be seen to influence his further course. Forty Jewish assassins now band themselves together (Acts xxiii. 12, 13), report their decision to the chief priests and Council, and ask them to enter into the conspiracy which planned to have Paul presented again before the Sanhedrin, intending to kill him while he was passing from the castle of Antonia to the meeting-place. They evidently trusted to numbers at the time of the festival in the Temple court to overpower the guard.

We hear now of Paul’s family for the first time as being in Jerusalem; for it is said that his “sister’s son” heard of the conspiracy, and disclosed it to Paul. He in turn made it known to one of the centurions of the guard; and Claudius Lysias, the chiliarch, or commander of the garrison, determined to take him privately out of Jerusalem, and conduct his further examination at Cæsarea. This was successfully carried out, and he was made safe in one of the rooms of the prætorium of Herod at Cæsarea. Claudius Lysias feels the case too serious to be dealt with by himself, as the local commander in Jerusalem, and sends with Paul a letter to Felix, the governor of the province (see Acts xxiii. 26–35).

The intensity of hatred toward Paul may be seen in the fact that the plan of the assassins seems to have been entirely acceptable to the chief priests, and that, in five days after Paul’s removal, the high priest, Ananias, secured counsel to present his case, and went to Cæsarea to appear against Paul (Acts xiv. 1, 2). (This high priest lost his life at the hands of his own countrymen a few years later.) Paul is allowed to defend himself before the governor, Felix, which he does by showing that as a Jew no offence has been committed by him against the Jews, except in the matter of declaring that he believed in “the resurrection of the dead” (Acts xxiv. 10–20).

Felix, although an unscrupulous person, as he appears in Josephus’s account, seems disposed to treat Paul with lenity, and refuses to try the case to its conclusion until the commander of

the Jerusalem garrison, Lysias, has been further consulted. He put Paul in the care of a centurion, and allows his friends to minister to him; and a further motive is given,—that Felix knows something of the “WAY.”

The wife of Felix was Drusilla, the sister of Herod Agrippa II., who had deserted her husband, King of Emesa, to marry Felix. She is a Jewess, and seems to have been as unscrupulous as her husband, whose lenity toward Paul is further accounted for by the fact that he expected the disciples of Jesus and Paul's friends “to give him money” to let Paul go. Paul is again brought up before the governor and his wife; but, as no bribe was forthcoming, and as about this time Felix was removed from his office, Paul was left a prisoner. The determination of the Jews to do away with so dangerous an opponent as Paul is indicated by the suggestion (Acts xxiv. 27) that Paul was left a prisoner in order to prevent the Jews from presenting charges at Rome against Felix.

The successor to Felix in the office of governor of Cæsarea is Portius Festus, before whom Paul is now arraigned on charges of heresy, sacrilege, and sedition. Upon the first appearance of the new governor at Jerusalem the Jewish Council bring the case before him, though Paul is safely kept at Cæsarea. Festus promises to take up the case on his return (Acts xxv. 1-12). When Paul is arraigned he presents a general denial (Acts xxv. 8), and shows great self-possession and complete knowledge of his rights as a Roman citizen, though a prisoner (Acts xxv. 9-12).

We now come to the lesson proper. Herod Agrippa is now king, tributary to the Roman power, and his sister is Bernice; and in these two much of the weakness and vice of the Herodian family can be illustrated.

II. TOPICS FOR STUDY.

1. Give some account of the reign of Nero, in which this lesson finds its place, and the administration of the imperial province of Syria by the governors mentioned in the lesson, and the Herodian family, among whom the province was divided as tributary kings.

2. Examine the validity of the charges of heresy, sacrilege, and sedition, made against Paul, and state what course might be taken by a representative of Roman government with regard to these charges. Try to realize and describe the scene in which Paul, an insignificant Jewish figure, is placed as pleading his own case in the midst of the pomp of an imperial court (consult Schürer, “The Jewish People in the Time of Christ”; also Ramsay's “Paul, a Roman Citizen”).

3. What evidence does Paul give in his several addresses to justify the remark of Festus that “much learning had produced madness” in him?

4. Observe the common misinterpretation of Acts xxvi. 27-29, in which Paul addresses Agrippa. Compare the Authorized and Revised Versions of the New Testament, and say which statement seems to you the most likely to be true.

5. Analyze carefully Paul's address from the standpoint of its rhetoric, its Jewish learning, its integrity of purpose, and compare the account of this version with the two accounts previously given (Acts ix. and xxii.).

6. At this point, since it closed Paul's relation to his own people, and he is to make his final departure from Palestine, give some review of Paul's character and career, and try to sum up how far, up to this moment, the new faith, called “THE WAY” and “THE GOOD NEWS,” had made progress.

LESSON XVII.

SHIPWRECK ON THE WAY TO ROME.

LESSON TEXT.—“Hopeth all things, endureth all things.”—1 Cor. xiii. 7.

I. CONNECTING HISTORY.

Paul transfers his cause to the imperial tribunal; and Agrippa and Festus, although willing to dismiss the charges against him, are compelled to abide by Paul's decision (Acts xxvi. 30-32). Paul's missionary purpose is to go to the very boundary of the Roman Empire, even to Spain, at this time the commercial centre of the empire in Europe. The account of Paul's voyage is now given in the first person: “When it was determined that *we* should sail for Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners to a centurion named Julius, of the Augustan band.” Thus is introduced an account singularly graphic and detailed. It reads as though it had been preserved in an actual epistle written by a companion of Paul's voyage (Acts xxvii., xxviii. 1-16). The student should read this passage with a map before him, and trace the course of the ship from point to point. There is no other passage in the Book of Acts so explicit.

II. SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR STUDY.

1. Give some account of navigation in the first century of our era, and point out in the lesson evidences of defective equipment and unseamanlike management of the ships. Who was in command of the ships? Why?
2. Note the sense of destiny in Paul, appearing in his offering advice and afterward recalling it to their recollection.
3. Give a description of the part which the places here named, Cyprus, Malta, Syracuse, etc., had in earlier and later history.
4. Give some account of the fast of the atonement among the Jews, referred to in verse 9. Why is this mentioned with respect to the dangers of navigation?
5. Name the items in this lesson which point, by their accuracy, to the authenticity of the account here given of Paul's voyage.
6. Who were probably the “barbarians” referred to (Acts xxviii. 2)? Were they barbarians?
7. The church at Rome was not of Paul's planting, since it was there, all ready to greet him, coming out as far as forty miles to meet him (Acts xxviii. 15).
8. Give a description of the Appian Way, by which Paul approached the city of Rome. How does it appear now?

III. SUGGESTIONS.

1. Just subsequent to the time of Paul's departure from Jerusalem there broke out in Judea a persecution of the disciples of Jesus. According to the Jewish Antiquities of Josephus, Annas, the high priest (son of the Annas before whom Jesus was tried), and the Sanhedrin availed themselves of an interval between the

removal of Festus and the arrival of Albinus, the new procurator, to vent his hatred upon the disciples of Jesus. Josephus and the Pharisees sought to moderate the fury of this attack upon the church in vain. James, the brother of Jesus, the aged bishop of Jerusalem, and many others perished. The account in the history of Eusebius, attributed to Hegesippus, the writer of the next century, gives a very pictorial setting to this scene. In both these accounts there is much which must be taken with due regard to historical accuracy, but of great interest as tradition.

2. The vision (verses 21-26) which Paul saw, in which he stood before the Roman imperial power a prisoner, he uses to cheer those who fear death before reaching Rome. It is a trace of the narrator's enthusiasm for Paul, intensified by the characteristic utterances, "God whose I am and whom I also serve" (verse 23), and "I believe God, that it shall be even as it hath been spoken unto me." The effect is somewhat diminished by (verse 26) a bit of subsequent history inserted as prophecy.

3. The touches of reality in the narrative are very many and of the highest value to its authenticity; for instance, the choice by the centurion of a small ship to Adramyttium, in hope of finding a more commodious vessel in some larger port than Cæsarea. The fair wind carries them from Cæsarea to Sidon in one day, a distance of sixty-seven miles. The demeanor of Julius toward Paul throughout is a consistent recital. "The much time spent" (verse 9) would bring the voyagers near to the middle of the dangerous time for navigation, which usually ceased in November. (This same year 61 A.D. the vessel on which Josephus and six hundred others were going to Rome was wrecked in the Adriatic.) The finding of the grain-ship at Myra, carrying wheat from Egypt to Italy, Paul's account of his perils (see 2 Cor. xi. 23), were doubtless used to enforce his advice to the centurion to remain at Fair Havens. These are but a few of the indications of the genuineness of the account of this voyage. Note the gradual shoaling of the sea (verses 27-29), the ruse of the sailors (verse 30), the quickness of Paul to divine their motive, the prompt action of the Roman centurion, in which one almost hears the stroke of the short Roman sword on the ropes which held the boat.

4. The mythical element appears in the account of "the viper" and the healing of the father of Publius (Acts xxviii. 3-10), where Paul's power to heal is mentioned by *Luke, the Physician*, if it is he who gave the account of the scenes on Malta.

5. For an account of the Pontine Marshes, through which Paul and his companions took their way, and the point of entrance into Rome, and the conditions surrounding Jewish Rome, see Hausrath's "New Testament Times," vol. iv. pp. 144-146.

NOTE.—The lesson leaf does not give space for detailed explanations. The student is therefore asked to study carefully the work of Prof. Ramsay, "Paul the Traveller," which is on this lesson of especial value. See also Smith's "Voyage and Shipwreck of Paul."

LESSON XVIII.

A PRISONER AT ROME.

(Acts xxviii. 16-31.)

LESSON TEXT.—“Forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before.”—PHIL. iii. 13.

I. THE SITUATION.

Paul and his companions, having traversed the Appian Way, enter Rome. According to some manuscripts the “centurion [Julius] delivered the prisoners to the captain of the prætorian guard.” Then in all manuscripts we have the statement, “Paul was suffered to abide by himself with the soldier that guarded him” (Acts xxviii. 16).

“After three days,” which doubtless he required for rest after so hazardous a voyage, here as elsewhere Paul makes his appeal first to his own countrymen. He summons the chief of the Jews, or perhaps “those that were of the Jews first” he called together. He recites to them the causes which had conspired to bring him a prisoner to Rome. He desires especially to prevent them from thinking he is there as an accuser of his own nation (verse 19). He has been always a loyal Jew. To his mind the message he has to deliver is an essential part of the revelation through Messiah to the Jews. He seeks now to test in Rome the understanding of his countrymen, as he had done at Jerusalem. It is quite certain that, when “he expounded, testifying the kingdom of God and persuading them concerning Jesus, both from the law of Moses and the prophets” (verse 22), Paul was using the Old Testament in a way unheard of by his hearers; for no teaching which they had received or transmitted provided for “a suffering Messiah,” who should die the death of a criminal and be raised again from the dead. We are not quite sure of Paul’s argument, but it was a very marked departure from the ordinary interpretation of Jewish Messianic hope. We are not surprised to find, therefore (verses 24, 25), that “some believed the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved,” and that they departed “when they agreed not among themselves.”

Paul’s disappointment was profound, and he applies to them in bitterness of soul the words of Isaiah vi. 9 (verses 26, 27). He announces to them that the “salvation” which was the Jews’ to receive, being rejected by them, would be offered to the Gentiles, who would hear it (verse 28).

The record of Paul’s ministry at Rome closes abruptly, so far as the Book of Acts has given it, with the statement that this prisoner abode two whole years in his own hired house, “and received all that went in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, none forbidding him” (verses 30, 31).

The supposition is that he was then released, and that it was

not this imprisonment which ended in his death, but a later one. Although the "two years" would come near to the time of the persecution by Nero, if certain commentators are to be followed, a very good defence can be made for a second imprisonment about A.D. 64. This would place the first imprisonment A.D. 61 or A.D. 62, the beginning of Nero's worst period, in which Seneca lost all influence over Nero.

Much additional light upon Paul's imprisonment may be gained from the epistles written at Rome,—certainly the epistle to the Philippians, and, if the Ephesian and Colossian epistles be admitted to be Paul's, then these also, together with that to Philemon; and, if a second imprisonment be not admissible, then also the second letter of Paul to Timothy, if, indeed, this be Paul's. These are matters for critical debate too extended to be treated here.

II. AS SEEN IN THE LETTERS.

Timothy is with Paul at Rome. He shall be sent to Philippi later, as Epaphroditus had been an earlier messenger (Phil. i. 1 and Phil. ii. 19, 20).

Paul recounts the effect of his ministry as a prisoner (Phil. i. 12-17). See also Phil. iv. 21, 22, Caesar's household. The tribute to his fellow-prisoners is tender and earnest: Epaphroditus, Phil. ii. 25-30, and again Phil. iv. 18; Onesimus, see epistle to Philemon, 10-12; Epaphras, Mark, Aristarchus, Luke, Demas, are referred to, Philemon 23, 24. Also in the epistle to the Colossians, iv. 7-14, we find further reference to these same companions of Paul in Rome. And another, Tychicus, appears, as also in epistle to Ephesians, vi. 21, 22; he is the letter-carrier for Paul to Colossæ and Ephesus.

That Paul expected to leave Rome, having been released or expecting to be released, appears from Philemon 22.

NOTE.—A very good study of this period may be had in narrative form in "Onesimus" by Prof. Abbott, "Dark Days" by Farrar, and "Nero" by Ebers. But care must be used to keep the conversations strictly to the period and clear of later expressions, carried back and put into the mouths of first-century speakers. Any interest attained at the expense of historic accuracy is to be avoided.

LESSON XIX.

HOW THE NEW TESTAMENT WAS MADE.

LESSON TEXT.—“The word of God is not bound.”—2 TIM. ii. 9.

I. HOW MADE UP.

The fact that “the books” which make up “the Bible” come to us bound all together leads to a very great misunderstanding as to what they were originally. People who say you must either take the whole Bible or leave it all forget certain very plain facts:—

1. The books of the Bible represent a growing literature, which accumulated through a thousand years; *i.e.*, from the ninth century before Christ to the second century after Christ, inclusive.

2. Those which were at one time held in great reverence, but do not now appear as holy scripture, were very many. They constitute the so-called Apocryphal writings. “The survival of the fittest” applies to the Bible, and especially to the New Testament, although even here some of those left out might bear quite close comparison with some taken into the collection. Compare epistle of Jude with epistles of Clement to the Corinthians. But the selection, made in part by decisions of councils and in part by the spiritual instinct of holy men, has given us the best of the sacred writings as the New Testament.

3. The writings were not originally the New Testament, but *memorabilia*, sayings of the Lord, letters of his apostles to special groups of disciples, visions, etc. They became sacred because they served a sacred purpose. They were deemed inspired because they inspired him who read them.

4. The order in which the books of the New Testament now stand is not the order in which they were produced. This order cannot be stated with certainty; but it is quite sure that the gospels in their present form are not so early as the epistles. Among the gospels the order which is generally adopted is this,—Mark, Matthew, Luke, John. The epistles of Paul all rank earlier than the gospels, as Paul is thought to have been put to death during the reign of Nero, probably about the year 61.

The earliest epistles of Paul and those admitted by all critics to be genuine are 1 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Romans, Galatians. Besides these, Philippians, 1 Timothy, 2 Thessalonians, are commonly reckoned to be Paul's epistles. To a large number of students the evidence ascribing to Paul Ephesians and Colossians and 2 Timothy seems very strong. The epistle of James has very strong proof to sustain its claim to be an original document of an overseer of the church in Jerusalem, *probably* James, the brother of the Lord. It was admitted as canonical in the fourth century, but as late as Luther's time its doctrine of “good works” caused it to be disparaged by “the faith party”; but to students of the social conditions in the early church its strong ethical passion commends it as one of the earliest of the New Testament writings. The first epistle of Peter and first epistle of John are commonly referred to the writers whose names they bear.

No one knows who wrote the epistle to the Hebrews. Evidently the author's mind was saturated with Jewish local color. Students agree that Paul *did not* write it, and that many of the corruptions of primitive Christian thought which appear as theories of atone-

ment and intercession of Christ are due to this epistle, and have but little support in the other epistles and none whatever in the gospels. The Book of Revelation is a curious vision, and seems to have been part Jewish and part Christian in origin.

II. THE GOSPELS.

Mark's is the simplest as well as the oldest, beginning with the baptism of Jesus and ending with his burial. It knows nothing of the supernatural birth, and the verses about the resurrection in the last chapter were admitted by the revisers to be no part of the original gospel.

Matthew's gospel is a composite document, made up of some very old material, "sayings of the Lord" (as seen in chap. v.-vii. and xiii.), and some very late matter (as in chap. xxiv. and xxv.), and the preface about the supernatural birth of Jesus. By careful study we can trace in this gospel the strata in which it is built.

Luke's gospel is a deliberate attempt to gather all the "*memorabilia*" and "sayings" into an orderly account. It has preserved some very precious matter (for instance, chap. xv.) not contained in any other gospel. Its appreciation of the humanity of Jesus (in spite of the prefatory note about the birth) has led to its being called the gospel of the Son of man.

John's gospel is the latest of all in its production, and is not by many thought to belong to the first century, and not to be written by John. Some very learned scholars take the view that it is by John, but their number steadily declines. It is generally thought to be a "*purpose*" gospel, produced by the Alexandrian or Greek type of Christian thought. It has but little value as history, but great value for spiritual inspiration. If it was produced in the former half of the second century, it is really more valuable rather than less valuable; for it expresses the thought of the teaching of Jesus when he had been gone a hundred years. John's gospel must be treated as developing these sayings rather than recording them; but its view of the nature of man and his relation to God and his allegiance to the Great Revealer of God, Jesus of Nazareth, has made it the most prized and inspiring of all the gospels.

III. NOTES.

The writings of the New Testament came into their present form by slow degrees. The gospels were originally told by those who "went in and out" with Jesus to those who had never seen him. The miracles they record naturally grew more wonderful the oftener they were told, and in proportion to the habit of mind of those who told and heard them. The works of healing might very well have occurred. They still occur when the power in the healer meets the susceptibility of the sick. Many of the other "powers" recorded grew out of the moral quality shown in the incident. His social tenderness and companionableness might afford ground for the water and wine story at Cana, and his protecting compassion for such a story as the walking on the water and stilling the storm. These are not the gospel,—good news of God,—but natural fruits of imagination newly informed by great religious feeling. The myth is as natural as the fact, and not to be despised. If there were no such things in the gospels, the omission would discredit them as early documents altogether.

The gospels were first of all spoken in the language of the people who told the good news of God. Matthew's gospel was originally written in Aramaic, the vernacular of the Palestinian Jew. Then this and all the other writings passed into their present Greek form. The earliest copies in Greek extant are the Sinaitic manuscript and the Vatican manuscript, belonging early in the fourth century, and the Alexandrian manuscript, a little later than these. There are other early manuscripts of the New Testament,—translations made in the third, fourth and fifth centuries and used by the Syrian and Egyptian and Gothic Christians; but, whilst their value is great, they do not rank with the Greek texts made before the sixth century.

LESSON XX.

REVIEW AND SUMMARY.

I. THE GROUND COVERED

By the missionary journeys of Paul and his companions we have found to extend from Antioch in Syria on the east to Rome on the west. Possibly he went as far westward as Spain. This ground was traversed many times in part, showing that when the need was greatest or the strategic point most important, as at Corinth and Ephesus, Paul appeared most frequently or remained longest. His own feeling about this period of about thirty years of missionary activity may be gathered from the summary of his sufferings (2 Cor. xi. 23-33).

Our Lesson XVIII. leaves Paul at Rome, imprisoned and awaiting trial. We suggested the probability that he was released, and did not die until after a second imprisonment, which would bring him to the persecution inflicted upon the Christians by Nero, about A.D. 64. This view is strongly maintained by Prof. Burton (University of Chicago) in his very useful "Records and Letters of the Apostolic Age." He assumes a *fourth* missionary journey, and gives what he calls a "probable construction" of Paul's last work, on the assumption that the references in 1 Timothy, Titus, 2 Timothy, point to work and travel impossible to the accounts given in the Book of Acts. It is an interesting speculation, and adds reality to the closing chapter of Paul's life. It is as follows:—

1. He went to Asia and Macedonia, as by expressed intention (Phil. ii. 24, Philemon 22).
2. Perhaps also to Spain (Rom. xv. 24-28), confirmed by Clement's epistle to Corinthians.
3. He returned to the East and visited Ephesus, where he left Timothy in charge of the congregation (1 Tim. i. 3).
4. He went into Macedonia. Thence or soon after leaving there he wrote to Timothy (1 Tim. i. 3).
5. He went from Macedonia to Miletus, stopping at Troas on the way (2 Tim. iv. 13).
6. At Miletus he left Trophimus (2 Tim. iv. 20).
7. From Miletus he went to Crete, where he left Titus (Tit. i. 5).
8. From Crete he went to Corinth, where he left Erastus (2 Tim. iv. 20), and whence he probably wrote to Titus.
9. From Corinth he probably went to Nicopolis (Tit. iii. 12). It is quite possible that he was arrested here and sent to Rome.
10. In Rome he wrote Second Timothy, and was put to death. Whether Prof. Burton's summary can stand as history or not, the student will find it an interesting bit of work to compare this itinerary with the passages quoted.

II. WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

About the age of the apostles should be now reviewed. Only a part can be indicated here.

1. We see a difference between Paul's view of the work of Jesus and the view held by the writers of the gospels, when we compare the epistles with the parables in the earlier part of these lessons. This may be accounted for by the fact that Paul's pre-

vious training as a Jewish Rabbi made a different habit of thought from that in the simpler minds of those who followed Jesus personally in his lifetime, and on whom the gospel editors depended.

2. We see a difference between the disciples of Jesus in the Jerusalem church and the disciples of Jesus in the Greek cities. We saw Paul's contention for a larger liberty for the Gentiles and how he won a victory for universal religion.

3. We have been introduced to several helpers of Paul in his work whose names have become a part of the history of early Christianity. Name them and tell what you know about them.

4. We have been taken to several of the great cities of the elder world, and have connected our church history with the world story which preserves the names of Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, Athens, and Rome.

5. We have learned something about the condition of the early church as to its morals, its organization, its purposes, its place in the society of the Roman world of the first century.

6. We have seen a little of the different temper and disposition of Paul and his companions, both as to their power and their limitations and how they lived and worked.

7. We have found the claims of those who teach late doctrines and creeds and elaborate ritual and authoritative orders in the ministry of the Christian church not confirmed by our study of the origins of Christianity. We found "bishops," "overseers," and "presbyters" practically interchangeable terms, the organization of the Jewish congregations based on the synagogue, and the Greek congregations formed on the model of the guilds. We saw each congregation gathered simply as a group of believers in the teaching of Jesus, and each gathered around its own centre and independent of every other.

8. We have also discovered how simple the purpose of the Christian church was at the beginning. It was a body of people intent upon cleansing the common life of society and establishing the type of character which they loved in Jesus, their master.

9. We have found that God led these early believers "through illusion to the truth"; and that the Messiahship of Jesus, his second coming, the permanence of the Jewish state, the bodily resurrection, were views which changed even in the first century, and took on a more spiritual and universal meaning. But by them meanwhile the groups of disciples were held together until they became a solid mass, with which the empire of Rome had to reckon.

These are a few of the subjects of study brought out in the course of our studies. They show how human history is under the guidance of great ideals, and that these great ideals are embodied in great characters, and that what really saves the world and leads it to higher life is a Religion of Character,—**"THE LIFE WAS THE LIGHT OF MEN!"**

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